

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-13 (Canceled)

Claim 14 (New): A formulation for use in chrome-free and chrome tanning, comprising:

a clay mineral, which, after vigorous stirring for 30 minutes in water at 50°C, has a number average particle diameter of less than 2 μm , or a bimodal size distribution with a first, finely divided fraction, whose number average particle diameter is less than 0.5 μm , and a second, coarser fraction, whose number average particle diameter is less than 5 μm , determined in each case by the method according to ISO 13320-1, by combined laser light diffraction and light scattering, and wherein, the amount of the first, finely divided fraction is from 10 to 90% by weight;

and one or more substances selected from the group consisting of organic polymers, aldehyde tanning agents, sulfone tanning agents, resin tanning agents, phenol tanning agents, fatliquoring agents, vegetable tanning agents, dyes, pigments and mixtures thereof.

Claim 15 (New): The formulation as claimed in claim 14, wherein the one or more substances are selected from aldehyde tanning agents, and wherein the aldehyde tanning agents are glutaraldehyde or a derivative of glutaraldehyde.

Claim 16 (New): The formulation as claimed in claim 14, wherein the clay mineral has a number average particle diameter of less than 1 μm .

Claim 17 (New): The formulation as claimed in claim 14, wherein one or more substances, which, owing to their chemical structure, are capable of forming strong hydrogen bridge bonds with the clay mineral, are added to the clay mineral, before or during the use thereof, as a tanning agent.

Claim 18 (New): The formulation as claimed in claim 14, wherein the clay mineral is a phyllosilicate.

Claim 19 (New): The formulation as claimed in claim 14, wherein the phyllosilicate is a kaolinite, muscovite, montmorillonite, smectite, bentonite, or hectorite.

Claim 20 (New): A tanning agent, comprising a clay mineral, which, after vigorous stirring for 30 minutes in water at 50°C, has a number average particle diameter of less than 2 μm , or a bimodal size distribution with a first, finely divided fraction, whose number average particle diameter is less than 0.5 μm , and a second, coarser fraction, whose number average particle diameter is less than 5 μm , and wherein, the amount of the first, finely divided fraction is from 10 to 90% by weight.

Claim 21 (New): The tanning agent as claimed in claim 20, wherein the clay mineral has a number average particle diameter of less than 1 μm .

Claim 22 (New): The tanning agent as claimed in claim 20, wherein one or more substances, which, owing to their chemical structure, are capable of forming strong hydrogen bridge bonds with the clay mineral, are added to the clay mineral before or during the use thereof, as a tanning agent.

Claim 23 (New): The tanning agent as claimed in claim 20, wherein the clay mineral is a phyllosilicate.

Claim 24 (New): The tanning agent as claimed in claim 23, wherein the phyllosilicate is a kaolinite, smectite, muscovite, montmorillonite, bentonite, or hectorite.

Claim 25 (New): A method for preliminary tanning, comprising, treating a substrate with the tanning agent as claimed in claim 20.

Claim 26 (New): A method for retanning, comprising, treating a substrate with the tanning agent as claimed in claim 20.

Claim 27 (New): A method for tanning, comprising, treating a substrate with the tanning agent as claimed in claim 20.

Claim 28 (New): The formulation of claim 17, wherein the one or more substances which, owing to their chemical structure, are capable of forming strong hydrogen bridge bonds with the clay mineral, are selected from the group consisting of urea or urea derivatives, alcohols, polyols, propylene carbonate, organic amides, urethanes, saccharides or derivatives of saccharides, nitrocellulose, sulfite cellulose, ethylhexylcellulose, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 29 (New): The tanning agent of claim 22, wherein the one or more substances which, owing to their chemical structure, are capable of forming strong hydrogen bridge bonds with the clay mineral, are selected from the group consisting of urea or urea derivatives,

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alcohols, polyols, propylene carbonate, organic amides, urethanes, saccharides or derivatives of saccharides, nitrocellulose, sulfite cellulose, ethylhexylcellulose, and mixtures thereof.